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## VI.

EQUATORIAL REGIONS OF WESTERN AFRICA,  
WITH MAP.

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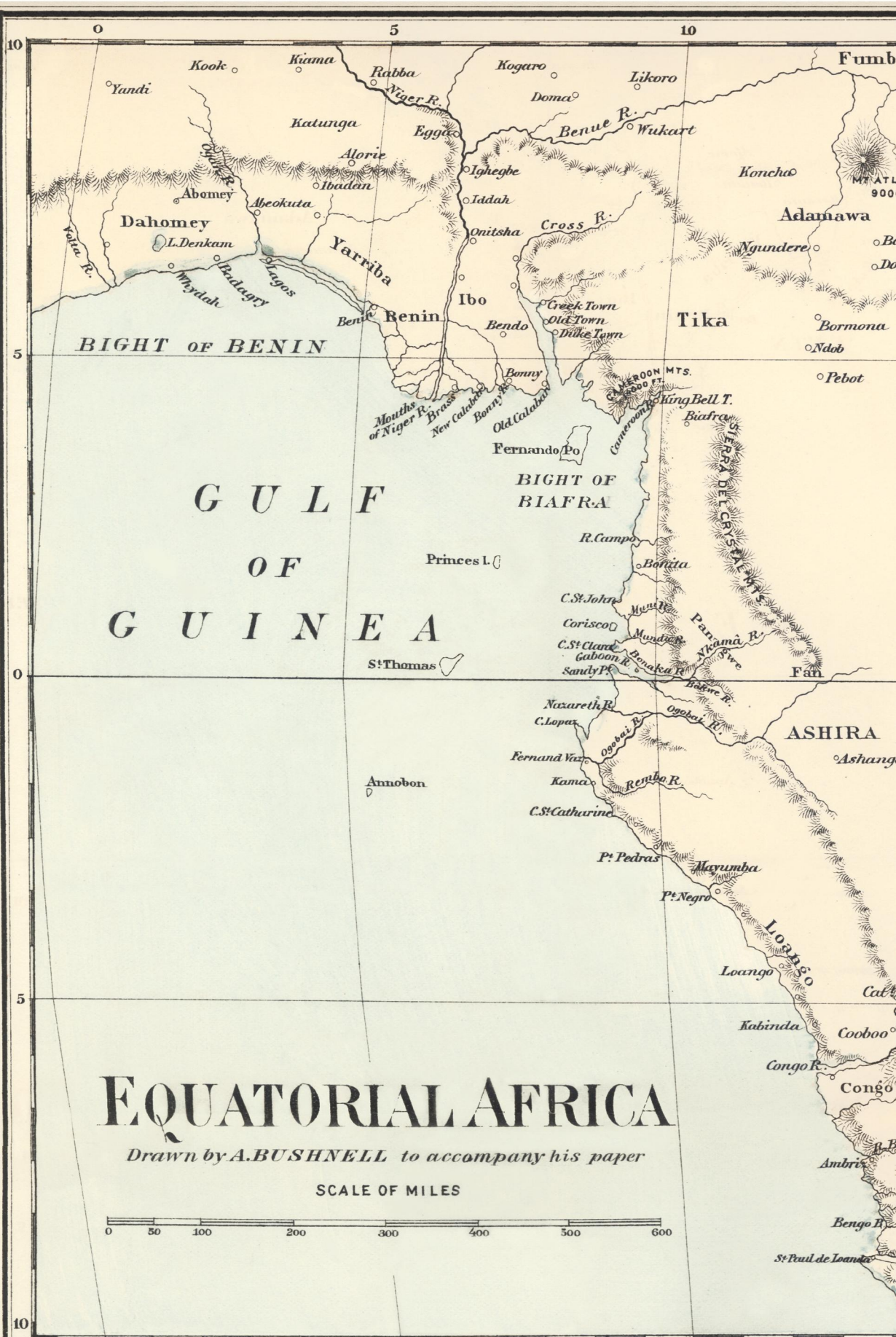
Abstract of a Paper, by Rev. ALBERT BUSHNELL, for twenty-seven years  
a Missionary at Gaboon, Western Africa.

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READ MAY 10TH, 1870.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL AND STATISTICAL SOCIETY: A little more than seven years since, on the eve of returning to western equatorial Africa, which had been the field of my missionary labors during a score of years, I had the honor of reading a paper before your Society upon that interesting country. In the closing paragraph, the attention of the Society was particularly directed to the unexplored regions of Ethiopia, as an important and inviting field for geographical research, with the hope that, under its auspices, or through its influence, an expedition might be sent out from this country to assist in lifting the dark veil that continued to conceal that vast portion of the globe from the knowledge of civilized nations. It seemed meet that our nation, which, from its birth, had been so intimately, and, alas! often unrighteously, connected with Africa and her children, should participate with the nations of Europe in the philanthropic work of exploring her dark recesses, and of conveying to her benighted nations the blessings of Christian civilization, and also of sharing with them the valuable commercial advantages which it was predicted would follow the cessation of the foreign slave trade.

Although these anticipations have not yet been realized,



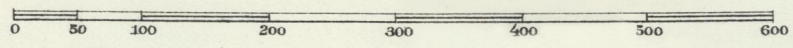
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# EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Drawn by A.BUSHNELL to accompany his paper

SCALE OF MILES





15

20

25

Fumbina

Kim

Dai

RUNGA  
Fertit

LAKE  
BAHRE EL GAZA

Adamawa

Mara

Baya

Doka

Bormona

Nelob

Pebot

Majunga

Pethericks Route

UNEXPLORED  
SUPPOSED  
LAKE

EQUATOR

REGIONS

ASHIRA

Ashango

ORISO

da

ngo R.

Cat

Cooboo Cat

Congo

S<sup>t</sup> Salvador

Ambris

Boge

Bengo R.

S<sup>t</sup> Paul de Loanda

Columba

Coanza R.

Cabango

Casonge

LONDA

Matiamvo

Mofa L.



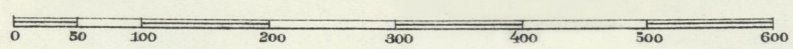




# EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Drawn by A. BUSHNELL to accompany his paper

SCALE OF MILES





# RUNGA

Fertit

Mara

LAKE  
BAHREL GAZA

UNEXPLORED  
SUPPOSED  
LAKE

EQUATOR

REGIONS

# LONDA

15

20

25







I am happy, on my return, to inform you that, through different agencies, the work of exploring has been gradually progressing, from various points—diminishing, every year, the *terra incognita*; rendering it morally certain that, at no very distant day, every portion of that vast land will be trodden by the feet of civilized men.

For the better elucidation of the subject, I have prepared and suspended before you a map of equatorial Africa, representing ten degrees of latitude on each side of the equator, and forty degrees of longitude, eastward from the meridian of Greenwich to the Indian Ocean. It is designed to present to the eye the extent to which explorations have been made—the foreign political establishments, the missionary stations, and the territory which remains to be explored. Through the indefatigable labors and sufferings of a succession of heroic explorers—from Mungo Park, who perished on the Niger in 1805, down to the present—the extensive countries lying between the Sahara and the equatorial regions have been explored, their rivers traced, their lakes and cities generally visited. Eastern equatorial Africa has, by missionaries and travelers, been pretty well explored as far west as the system of lakes, which form a grand characteristic of that portion of the world.

From the earliest periods, the sources of the Nile have been indefatigably sought after, and not unfrequently it has been supposed that the great problem had been solved. But the recent researches of Speke, Grant and Sir Samuel Baker, with his heroic wife, have thrown new and important light upon the subject. For a time, it was pretty generally admitted that the twin lakes, Victoria Nyanza and Albert Nyanza, were the long sought-for sources of that wonderful classic stream. But more recently, that prince of explorers, Dr. Livingstone, when last heard from at Ujiji, on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, had almost demonstrated a connection between that and the Albert Nyanza, making the real

sources of the Nile the streams which flow into the Tanganyika from the south in latitude from  $10^{\circ}$  to  $12^{\circ} 5'$ . The western portions of equatorial Africa have, during the past quarter of a century, been more minutely explored than the eastern portions, though not so far back from the coast, except in the vicinity of the Niger. Between the Niger and the Congo, our knowledge extends from 150 to 300 miles into the interior, leaving a territory about 1,200 miles square yet unexplored, concerning which we have no certain knowledge.

But notwithstanding our acquaintance with the western coast of equatorial Africa is confined to a narrower range than that of the eastern portion, it is not less interesting and important. It has its noted rivers, the Niger and the Congo, with numerous intervening streams, several of which, though short, are broad and deep, like the Gaboon, which is eight miles wide, with a safe anchorage, sufficient to accommodate all the navies in the world. It has its mountains, insular and continental; Fernando Po, Princess, St. Thomas and Annobon, are a range of mountainous islands, with scenery rarely surpassed. On the main land, the Qua Mountains, Sierra del Crystal, and Cameroon, the latter rising 14,000 feet, and sometimes snow-capped, present some of the grandest scenery in the tropical world.

Eastern equatorial Africa has its magnificent system of lakes, which mighty reservoirs supply the Nile and enrich Egypt. We are now almost certain that similar interior lake reservoirs exist on the western side, from which issue probably the Ogobai, the Congo, and possibly even some of the western sources of the White Nile. Of this, we have during several years had surmises; and accumulating evidence, through native sources, has now removed all doubt. We suppose that between the highlands, which extend from the Cameroon to the equator, near the western coast, and the mountains that skirt the western borders of the Albert Nyanza, there is another



lake or lakes, the western borders of which may be found within 500 miles from the mouth of Gaboon, a little north of the equator. Although American missionaries, English traders and explorers, and French naval officers have made repeated efforts to reach this lake region during the last few years, they have thus far been unsuccessful, and our conjectures in reference to this interesting subject are based upon native reports.

Surprise is often expressed that the progress of exploration from the western coast has not been more rapid. But it should be remembered that most formidable obstacles have impeded this work ; and many difficulties still exist. With the exception of the Niger, and its southeastern branch the Benue, which have been explored ; there are no navigable rivers extending far into the interior. The navigation of the Congo is interrupted by cataracts some seventy miles from its mouth. The same is true of the Ogobai. The Gaboon, Moondah, and Mooney are comparatively short.

Until recently, the foreign slave trade has prevailed in most of this section ; and the maritime tribes have been almost constantly engaged in war with each other to obtain victims for the barracoons of the slavers, causing a hostile line of tribes between the coast and the interior, which it was difficult and perilous to attempt to pierce. The most persistent opposition has also been met by every explorer from the kings and chiefs of the native tribes bordering upon the unexplored regions. They are willing, and often desirous, to have white men visit them ; but will use every means in their power, foul and fair, to hinder these from passing beyond them, lest their interior neighbors should gain knowledge or strength from which their trade or other interests might suffer. But now that the slave trade has ceased, and the hitherto belligerent tribes are engaging in peaceful commerce, which is fast attracting the interior people toward the coast, and the facilities for exploring are greater than they have ever

been, we confidently believe that the work so long impeded and delayed will be, ere long, consummated.

Here lies the largest unexplored portion of the globe ; and he who shall first succeed in traversing it will win immortal fame, enrich science, and confer inestimable blessings upon Africa and the world. A French naval officer who recently ascended the Nile to Gondokoro, with the design of crossing the country from the Albert Nyanza to Gaboon, perished in the attempt. M. Du Chaillu, whom I am happy to meet here, a few years since visited Ashango Land, was compelled to retrace his steps, without accomplishing his ardent wishes ; and now comes the report, which we deem incredible, that the heroic Dr. Livingston, proceeding from the Tanganyika to the western coast has met a tragic death. We may still hope to hear from this remarkable man, and perhaps for him is reserved the honor to accomplish the grand achievement to which I have referred.

The temperature of this part of Africa is not as high as might be supposed, the thermal equator crossing the coast several degrees north of the line.

The climate of all this region is malarious, and at first proved fatal to not a few foreigners connected with commercial, exploring and missionary enterprises ; but increasing sanitary knowledge, and the improvements introduced by Christian civilization, are every year rendering it less and less perilous. Persons of suitable constitution may, with proper care, endure many years and accomplish much labor ; but still it is not the normal climate for white men, and the country will never be extensively settled by them. The French government have a colony at Gaboon, which has become a valuable naval station ; the Spaniards have an establishment at Fernando Po, the terminus of the English lines of steamers, and the English government have a colonial establishment at Lagos. All the other places on the coast and ports on



the rivers are still under native control, and are free to vessels of all nations.

The soil of equatorial Africa, with the exception of sandy regions near the sea, and marshy jungles near the rivers and lagoons, is fertile and capable of producing most of the tropical productions ; but the majestic forests are generally yet unbroken, and only a small portion of the land is under even the imperfect cultivation which the females and slaves bestow upon it. They have no horses or cattle, or other beasts of burden, the elephant not having been domesticated ; but in most of the villages may be seen fowls, and flocks of goats and hairy sheep. The grand old forests abound with herds of elephants, in the capture and slaughter of which the native hunters display much courage and skill ; their bodies are eaten and their tusks form an important article of trade. The lion is nowhere found in this region, but leopards abound. Antelopes of various species are common, and almost every variety of the monkey tribe, including the anthropoid gorilla, are denizens of the forests and jungles. The country is rich in flowers of brilliant colors and birds of gaudy plumage. Serpents of enormous size, and poisonous reptiles and insects, annoy and sometimes imperil human life. As there are no good roads, or facilities for land travel, journeying is mostly on the numerous rivers, creeks and lagoons, in boats and canoes, in the manufacture and management of which the natives show no little skill.

The western Ethiopan tribes are nations of traders. While they are averse to agriculture, for traffic they have a passion, and in it they are shrewd and active. During generations past, many of them have been employed by the foreign slave traders as factors, to obtain by purchase, theft, or war, victims for their horrid piracy. This nefarious business developed their worst passions, and destroyed in their minds the sacredness of human life. Vast regions were desolated, and some whole tribes were obliterated,

while others remained only in scattered remnants. While this traffic remained, there was but little desire for any other. It was easier, and more congenial with their savage natures, to capture and sell a fellow-man than to kill an elephant or to labor and develop the resources of their country. But nearly simultaneously with the close of our late war and the extinction of slavery in the United States, the slave trade, Africa's chronic scourge, ceased. A wonderful change is now everywhere apparent. The Ethiopian now stands up in his manhood, and no longer regards himself and his race as chattels. Hundreds of thousands of the people are industriously engaged in developing the riches of their country to exchange for foreign manufactures. In their native state, their necessities were few and easily supplied; but the introduction of Christian civilization increases their wants and stimulates them to industry and enterprise. This is rapidly developing the valuable products of the country so much needed in civilized lands, and, at the same time, furnishing a vast market for the surplus manufactures of Europe and the United States, from a cambric needle to a cooking stove. The bark cloth with which they were formerly clad is being exchanged for cotton fabrics, muslins, and silks, and ready-made clothing of the latest style, for both sexes, find a prompt sale. Bamboo huts are being exchanged for comfortable dwellings—in some instances constructed from lumber exported from this metropolis. These houses must be furnished with chairs, sofas, mirrors, Yankee clocks and other costly furniture. As an index of the progress of civilization, I will mention that soap, that great civilizer, is coming into general use. Twenty-five years ago, American missionaries at Gaboon discovered the Indian rubber, and indicated the trade which has become vast and lucrative. Its production furnishes profitable employment for multitudes of the natives—men, women and children. The palm groves of the jungles are furnishing oil of great value in large



quantities. The ivory, ebony and bar-wood are brought from the interior, and, as soon as railroads and other means of conveyance are provided, the quantities will increase. As Christian civilization advances, additional useful and valuable mineral and vegetable discoveries will be made, rendering the commerce of equatorial Africa unsurpassed in richness. Already the steamers of several lines from Great Britain and the continent pass up and down the coast each month, loaded with freight and passengers. It is to be regretted that our government has left Europe to reap the lion's share of the commercial advantages of this country, by delaying to establish a line of steamers to western Africa. While commerce is stimulating the maritime tribes of equatorial Africa to activity, it is a sad fact that the intoxicating drink which it pours in upon them is desolating the country, and, in some places, almost decimating the population. Would that merchants engaged in trade with these benighted tribes could see that it would be for their own interests, as well as for the good of the people, to refrain from sending out poisonous liquors, which the excitable Ethiopian cannot use with impunity.

Among the different tribes and nations of equatorial Africa there is considerable diversity in color and physical appearance, and in social life. Yet, in many respects, there is a similarity. Those who have most recently descended from the highlands of the interior are of a lighter tinge, and are physically superior to those who have long resided upon the low, malarious regions of the rivers and lagoons near the sea. The interior people, also, are more independent, courageous and warlike, and also more ingenious in the manufacture of warlike implements from the ore they dig from their native hills, and of spoons and dishes of wood, and mats and cloth from rushes and the bark of a tree. They have been more dependent upon their own manufactures, while

those near the coast have relied upon commerce to bring them foreign manufactures.

No people in the world are more teachable and imitative—none more susceptible to intellectual, social and moral improvement—than these Ethiopian tribes. This has been demonstrated among different nations with whom missionaries have lived and have labored. They display remarkable linguistic abilities. Not unfrequently men are found, near the trading ports, who, with no knowledge of letters, speak, intelligibly, several European languages, besides a larger number of native languages ; and, with no knowledge of figures, will correctly transact business to a large amount.

They may never develop Anglo-Saxon mental strength ; but they are quick, ingenious, impulsive and enthusiastic ; passionately fond of music, poetry and the beautiful, and capable of rising to a high and luxurious type of civilization. The past of Africa has been dark and afflicting, but a bright future is before her. Ethiopia is even now stretching out her hands unto God, and the sun of righteousness is rising upon her benighted millions with healing in his beams.